

# SOCIAL ACTION



**British Labor and the Churches**

**By CAMERON P. HALL**

**Social Significance of the Amsterdam Assembly**

**By JOHN C. BENNETT**

# SOCIAL ACTION

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*Ray Gibbons* back cover

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# The Church and Economic Life

Cameron Hall's brief report on the relationship—or rather the lack of it—between British churches and the labor movement will raise again the central question for church leadership here in the United States: How can the church be made meaningful to people who work for a living?

"The British people," says Mr. Hall, "have in truth walked out of their churches." A basic reason, he goes on to say, is that "They have come to feel that the parish church is not part of their life."

It is a sobering fact that so many here and abroad think of the church as not only a useless frill—something on the edge of real things—but also as a road-block on the way to the good life.

John Bennett's background discussion of the hotly debated "Amsterdam" reports raises more questions of the same kind. A lot of people who are not accustomed to read church documents have, with great excitement, read this one. Or, at any rate, the section that "condemns" capitalism.

A key point in Professor Bennett's discussion, it seems to me, is his observation that American delegates to Amsterdam came home with the conviction that "much which is taken for granted in this country is now irrelevant to the conditions of life and to the political possibilities of most of the world."

It may be that many of us American Protestants are doing our living and thinking in a world which bears little resemblance at all to the world of our brethren overseas.

A problem to ponder when you've finished these articles is pretty obvious. What do you want *your church to do now?*

—FRANCIS W. MCPEEK

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Francis W. McPeck is Industrial Relations Secretary of the Council for Social Action.

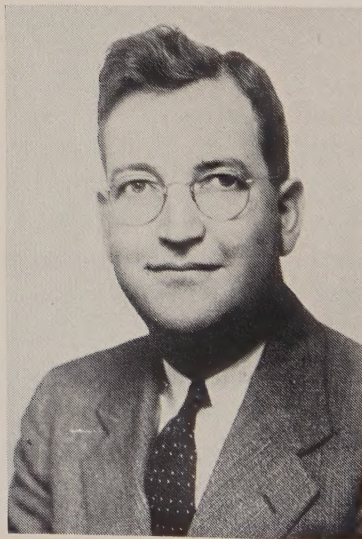
# British Labor and the Churches

By CAMERON P. HALL

What is taking place in Great Britain is of world significance. She has been uniquely dependent upon a world economy whose markets were largely molded within the British export-import pattern. In it she was dominant and prosperous. Her present near-bankruptcy is a sign of vast changes within the world economy. Her austerity program and her sweeping controls reveal her struggle to find a new basis for building her economic life within the changed conditions of world markets.

The British people are using political measures not only to deal with the economic breakdown, but with what they feel is the demoralization and the anti-social character of their industrialized society. They are combining an abhorrence of

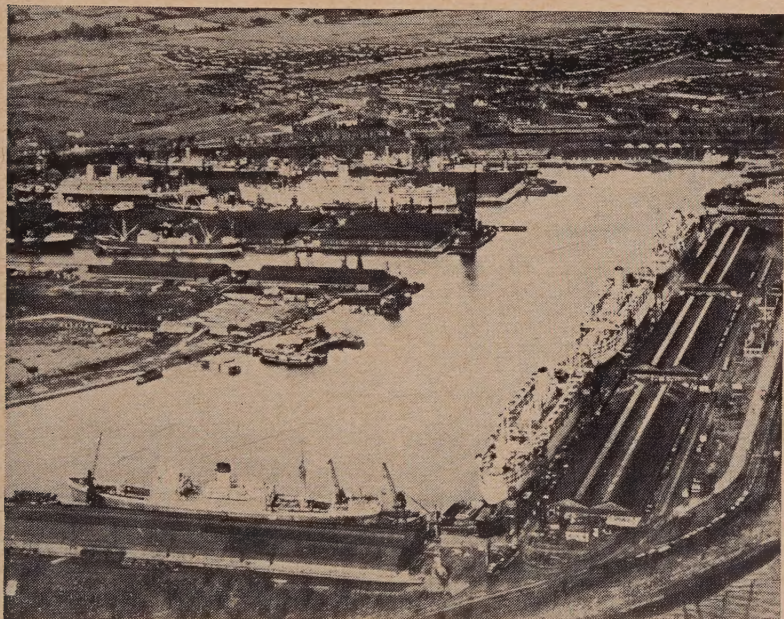
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## The Author

Cameron P. Hall is executive secretary of the Department of the Church and Economic Life, one of the most significant departments of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Mr. Hall spent several weeks in Great Britain last spring, interviewing leaders in business, labor, agriculture, cooperatives, education, and government. His article grew out of these interviews and first-hand observation of some of the more significant developments in Britain's economic and religious life.



*Acme*

Aerial view showing shipping crowded into the docks of Tilbury on the Thames River. Britain's aim is to insure economic and industrial recovery through imports and exports within the changed conditions of world markets.

Communism that is unsurpassed anywhere with a conviction that democracy stands in greater danger from governmental aloofness than from governmental intervention at strategic places in economic life. These elements are common in varying degrees throughout Western Europe; but the vigor of her democratic institutions and traditions and her place in the world of nations give special significance to the British program.

Of particular interest is the place of the labor movement in British life. What are its relations with employers? This can be easily answered. The issues between labor and management are found less on the industrial than on the political level. There are indeed many and sharp employer-employee differences. But

in comparison with our situation their industrial relations are excellent. And where their differences may become acute, both sides have agreed to resort to arbitration, with the award binding on each.

### ***Labor and the Government***

What of the relations of the labor unions to a Labor Government? The attitude of the unions, on the one hand, is that a Labor Government is understanding and sympathetic toward people whose living comes from wages. On the other hand, there is no disposition to have the unions become yes-men to the Government. They intend to reserve and to exercise the right to criticize, to raise questions, and to urge policy. The Government for its part recognizes that its present and future support rests, on the one hand, upon the unions. On the other hand, its mandate is also based upon intellectuals and the middle class, and as a Government its responsibility is national and not factional. Within such a framework there is room both for healthy differences and for mutual understanding and trust by which such differences can be resolved.

At one point especially the issue tends to sharpen. Normally a government feels no active responsibility for production. But with the present Labor Government, all-out production is a paramount concern. At stake is nothing less than national solvency, even on an austerity level.

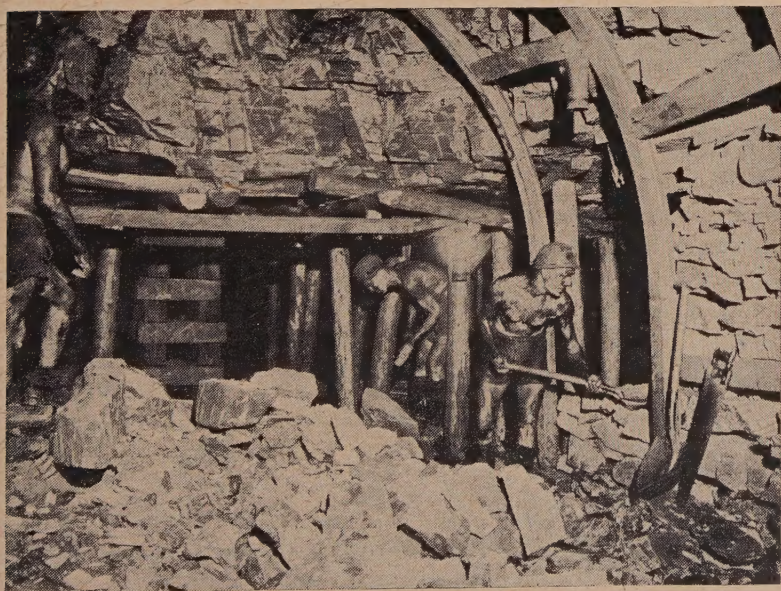
### ***The Drive for Production***

The drive by the Labor Government for production bears down heavily upon business. Much inefficiency, poor equipment, and restrictive practices must be eliminated. The first anti-monopoly legislation was enacted this year. Twenty per cent of the annual income is being allocated for capital investment.

But the Government's drive for all-out production also bears down upon the labor unions. Positive and responsible pressure for production is something new for labor leaders, both in the



unions and in the Government. Under private enterprise British labor has been conditioned to be suspicious of production pressures. Its repeated offers to cooperate with management in the production aspect of industry have been resisted or turned down; only during wartime emergencies has management yielded. To the average British worker production may well lead to "over-production," which has in the past been used to account for mass unemployment, in which he is the chief sufferer. Or increased production may come from the speed-up, which in turn takes a heavy toll from him. Or it may mean increased income for the absentee owner rather than for the worker on the job. Hence labor tends to be on guard against possible social ills from increased production,

*Acme*

Lack of modernization is a setback in Britain's drive for all-out production. Here, in a Channel Coast colliery, miners use shovels and sledge hammers.



*British Information Services*

A Joint Production Committee, consisting of an equal number of workers and management officials, meets once a month to deal with production problems affecting the factory.

and to be combative in securing its share of benefits through shorter hours and higher wages.

The labor unions tend to resist many pressures toward production. On the other hand, the Labor Government sees production from the broad national point of view. The dilemma here lies only secondarily between the Labor Government and the labor unions; it is rather within the individual worker himself as an employee and as a citizen. The labor leaders help resolve this schizophrenia. They serve as middlemen between the Labor Government, upon whom there is pressure for production in the name of the nation, and the wage earner, upon whom there is pressure for an increased standard of living for himself and his family. These pressures converge upon the labor official, and his quality of leadership is shown to the extent that he harnesses them into a single force. To date this



has been done with signal success. At the Trade Union Congress meeting this fall the leadership was firm against demands from the ranks which would have seriously disrupted the Government's program. At the same time the Congress made it crystal clear that the Government was being critically watched at a number of points, particularly in regard to prices and profits.

### *Government Under Scrutiny*

Two other pressures, although unrelated to one another, belong in the total picture of the Labor Government and the labor unions. Today's Government leaders hold the affection and trust of the rank and file of labor. But it is recalled that certain Labor members in a former Government apparently lost their heads through the power and eminence which they attained, and that they neglected their constituency and ignored their mandate. The living memory of what is held to have once happened sharpens today's resolve that it must not happen again. This leads some unionists to scrutinize any disposition in the present Government to modify its Labor Party program.

Another pressure comes from the exposed position of every British Government to public opinion. The nationalization of industry, the extension of social security, and other new government undertakings are each under some Ministry, whose head is directly answerable to Parliament. A recurring item on the Parliamentary calendar gives the Opposition, as well as the Government members, the opportunity to question the Government about the policy and administration of a Minister. Questions and answers occur before the bar of public opinion. There is an accountability of the Government to the people's representatives that is direct, open and sensitive.

### *Labor and the Churches*

What is the relation of the labor unions and their members to the churches? Any general answer, of course, must leave

room for variations. Four elements stand out as contributing to the positive aspect of these relations. First, the labor movement was begun and nurtured by church men and women, many of whom stayed in the churches as they rose in its leadership. Keir Hardie, one of the great evangelical spirits of his generation, was the father of the British Labor Party. The late Arthur Henderson was a lay leader in the Methodist Church until his death. George Lansbury was a passionate exponent of Christianity. These are names which represent much that is imperishable in the labor movement.

Second, the churches have for a long time gone into urban



*Acme*  
Arthur Henderson, lay leader in the Methodist Church and also one of the great leaders in the labor movement, is shown here (left) with British Labor's first Prime Minister, J. Ramsay MacDonald.



industrial communities with zeal and funds in what we think of in America as a national missions program. If the results seem inadequate in the light of the present situation, the extent and methods and vision of what was attempted by the British churches compare favorably with what churches here and elsewhere have tried.

Third, the British churches have given to British political life and thought prophets of both intellectual and moral greatness. Maurice and Kingsley, Bishop Gore and Archbishop Temple stand out among this number, which over the generations has been sizable. These leaders of the churches have given Christian vision and direction, power and understanding for new ventures on behalf of economic justice and well-being.

Fourth, there have been effective programs of social education and action. Several churches have committees and departments working along these lines. The Industrial Christian Fellowship of the Anglican Church is outside its official life, but has the strong support of its leaders. It has stressed the training of the ministry and the education of the laity. In its program it has caught up much of the vision, thinking, and drive of conferences such as Copek and Malvern.

### ***Affirmative Attitudes***

There is an affirmative attitude in labor circles toward the Church *as an institution*. British working people, as with the



*British Information Services*

The late Dr. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, always took a keen interest in the problems of labor.

population as a whole, have a strong sense of tradition and history, and their churches are deeply embedded in this tradition and rooted in this history. The churches are an integral part of British life, with its cohesiveness, its ceremony, its distinctiveness. This is accepted as something that should be.

There is likewise an affirmative attitude toward Christianity as the moral basis for British life. Christian moral concepts give substance to public opinion upon which public policy is based. This is true of those who stand aloof from the churches as well as those who actively participate in them; it is acknowledged by agnostics as it is by those who profess Christian beliefs. A labor leader of national standing summed up his views for me about as follows: he never goes to church, and he considers himself an agnostic, but he believes that British thinking on social problems is and should be related to Christian moral concepts, and he is confident that this will continue to be so even without the active participation by the people in the churches.

### *Exodus from Churches*

Against these affirmative elements in the relationship of labor and the churches must be placed other considerations which lead to an extremely somber view. The churches are felt to be irrelevant to the personal and social needs of the individual and his family, and therefore not calling for direct participation in them. The relation of the individual to the church is largely ceremonial. His church is enshrined in British tradition as a place where babies are to be baptized, children are to be confirmed, young people are to be married, and old people are to be buried. But it is neither the present intention nor custom to support the churches by attendance and activity.

The British people have in truth walked out of their churches. It is probably impossible to stress the seriousness of this situation. In England I was given 10 per cent as the top figure of those who at any time in the year attend church, but I was repeatedly cautioned to use this carefully, for in urban



areas it is closer to 5 per cent, and in congested areas the percentage is still lower.

I had confirmation of this from those whose ministry is among the urban lower income groups. The cleavage between the churches and the people widens as one descends the economic ladder. The educated and the more privileged of the population still feel that the churches are theirs in a way that is not true of those who, economically speaking, may be termed the "little people." A conclusion which had been forced on me from many sources is illustrated by three national leaders of the labor movement with whom I spent some time. One is an active churchman, who comes from the middle class and is a university graduate. The other two, who came up from the ranks of labor, are rigidly aloof from the churches.

### *The Church and Daily Life*

When one moves beyond the fact to its cause, one enters a large field upon which judgment should be pronounced only after careful study. The causes are certainly many and complex. But one important contributing cause seems quite clear. The British working people, like those of other countries, make up their emotions as well as their minds toward the churches largely in terms of the church in their parish. They have listened to what was said in it. They have watched it in relation to their efforts to solve their own and their families' problems of having enough to eat and to wear, of winning opportunities for leisure and education. They have come to feel that the parish church is not a part of their life. A Christian layman who rose high in the government civil service

There are occasions on which the churches, through their councils or through such persons as they may commission to speak on their behalf, should declare directly what they see to be the will of God for the public decisions of the hour. Such guidance will often take the form of warnings against concrete forms of injustice or oppression or social idolatry. They should also point to the main objectives toward which a particular society should move.

—Report of Amsterdam Assembly

Christians should recognize with contrition that many churches are involved in the forms of economic injustice and racial discrimination which have created the conditions favorable to the growth of communism, and that the atheism and the anti-religious teaching of communism are in part a reaction to the checkered record of a professedly Christian society. It is one of the most fateful facts in modern history that often the working classes, including tenant farmers, came to believe that the churches were against them or indifferent to their plight. Christians should realize that the church has often failed to offer to its youth the appeal that can evoke a disciplined, purposeful and sacrificial response, and that in this respect, communism has for many filled a deep moral and spiritual vacuum.

—Report of Amsterdam Assembly

believes that the great social protest of the British worker has not been primarily against the conditions under which he had to work, bad as they were, but even more against what he found when he returned home from his work — the housing conditions of his family, the lack of playgrounds for his children, the frustrated desire for education. In going to and from where he worked and where his family lived, the worker has passed his parish church. In it, he has concluded, there have been blindness, indifference, and aloofness to the vast problems which he has had to

face and overcome in the factory and at home.

Before describing some of the organized Christian groups and movements, there are some trends in church life that may well point to significant developments.

### *Attitude Toward Communism*

One is the attitude in the churches toward Communism. A working distinction is made between Communism as a political force and Communism as a spiritual force. Its corrupting influence where it has political power is strongly recognized. In all walks of life it is being opposed vigorously but not ruthlessly, without using methods for which Communism itself is criticized.

Many British Christians see in Communism an intellectual force that should be respected, although little followed in the



main. It expounds a philosophy of history which, although mistaken and perverse, is worthy of being studied and understood, and not merely denounced. Its analysis of society sheds helpful light at many points. But it is chiefly viewed as a spiritual power because of its enlistment of the devotion and sacrifice of so many adherents. In them is a deep stirring of the social conscience against social evils which should be intolerable to men of good will, and particularly to Christians. "The Challenge of Communism to Christianity" was the title of two addresses which I came upon in church circles. Under the religious perspective Communism is seen as the handwriting of God spelling out the message of judgment upon the churches, for the failure of the Christian witness in economic life becomes the seedbed for Communism. The statements of the Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches in August about the social conditions that turn people to Communism, and about the motives which inspire many Communists, recall my talks with church and other leaders in Great Britain.

While their number is very small, a few practicing Christians and active church members are Communists. These include a few clergy; I met one and heard of several others. There are laymen among them also, such as a scientist who is on the executive board of an urban council of churches. For them Communism is the implementation in social action of what Christians are prone to leave on the level of proclamation. The attitude toward them of their fellow Christians is that they are altogether naive about what Communism means in practice when it is in power, but that their right to be within the Christian fellowship must be respected.

### *New Status for Employees*

Another growing issue concerns the place of the employee in relation to management and stockholders. This question is raised in limited circles, but I heard it discussed with a vitality and conviction which assure that it will be pressed. One person with whom I talked put his thinking somewhat as follows:

"Generally speaking, the British worker has won pretty much all that is possible through his labor union. He is on his way to winning about all that is possible through a labor government. But his relation to the ownership and control of the plant in which he works remains little changed. He is still essentially an outsider, whose only part in it is the actual work that is required of him." The speaker is a high executive in an important business enterprise; he held a key position in the wartime government. He is well known as a Christian layman. I came upon similar views among a few other Christians. On the basis of their understanding of Christian principles for economic life, these hold that the corporate structure of industry, which vests power and control in stockholders alone, needs to come under vigorous scrutiny and to undergo drastic changes. The concern is to have workers become "agents of production" instead of "instruments of production."

While these persons base their view on Christian grounds, the subject itself is part of the context of thought and interest in other quarters as well. Guild Socialism, about which much was heard in the 1920's, advocated a great change in the relation of workers to industrial ownership and management. The labor unions are giving strong support to Works Committees in plants and factories which will relate labor to management in many aspects of business and industry other than the job itself.

### ***Youth-in-Industry***

Another important development is a Youth-in-Industry program. The Education Act of 1944 provides that young people who are employed will take a day off a week, not for vocational training in the skills and technicalities of their jobs, but for general education. Already a start has been made by some employers. Educators are convinced that the curriculum should be colored throughout by the fact that the youth who attend these classes are in industry or commerce. The approach to whatever they study, whether it be geography or philosophy,



must start with their daily working experience, for only in this way will education help them to discover meaning and significance in what they do.

In both England and Scotland church leaders are contemplating a program for church youth in industry. This has advanced as yet little further than exploring what can and should be undertaken. In addition to the general interest in this subject, within the churches it is recognized that industrial groups have largely been lost to the church, and that the road back must be travelled by those starting in industry. Also there is a frank appraisal of the inadequacy of current church youth programs. When these deal with practical problems of young people, they tend to center almost exclusively on youth-in-leisure—recreation and amusement, the family, boy and girl relations, and other leisure-time experiences. These ignore the fact that many young people are already at work, and that the adult life of most young people of today will be intimately and vividly related to industry. Christian training must therefore lead to Christian living in terms of one's job in industry. One senses the importance and possibilities of youth programs built upon these insights, and one can hope that they will be pushed forward.

### *Some Church Groups and Programs*

*The Christian Frontier Council.* This is more a fellowship than an organization. Originally founded by Dr. J. H. Oldham, its some thirty members are entirely lay men and women. Its significance is largely found in the help which comes from facing secular responsibilities together. Each member is in an occupation; he is in political life, as citizen or as official; he has social skills through training and experience. How may the responsibilities and opportunities that go with these be met as Christians?

The members of the Council are Christians of a high level of intelligence and devotion. They are diversified in their political affiliation and very much so in their occupations. Among

them are a prominent railroad executive, an Oxford instructor of medieval history, the general manager of an important industrial enterprise, a deputy minister in the present government, and a high ranking official in the civil service. Since most members live in or near London, there is a marked continuity of attendance at the monthly meetings. The subjects discussed at these meetings come out of the practical concerns of one or more of the members. Between tea and dinner the time is spent with the reading of a paper which is then commented upon by two members. After dinner there is a devotional period of about twenty minutes. The rest of the evening is given over to discussing the subject which was introduced earlier.

Since the Christian Frontier Council deals with problems that are a part of the secular responsibility of its members, the subjects and the discussion throughout are on the level of what is practical and concrete for laymen. But the over-all interest centers on dealing with these matters in terms of Christian faith and practice. The results of the Council are mainly registered in what its members themselves do; most of them are in positions to determine public or civic policy or to influence public opinion. At times the views which the *Christian News Letter* publishes are a result of the collective thinking of the members.

*Parliamentary Christian Socialist Group.* While the members of the Christian Frontier Council are from a wide range of occupations, the Parliamentary Christian Socialist Group consists of members who have a specific secular responsibility. They are all members of Parliament, and they are all members of the Labor Party. Likewise, they are all committed Christians. Their leader, the Hon. L. Skeffington-Lodge, explained to me that "I am a Socialist because I am a Christian," and that he and his colleagues feel the importance of supporting the Labor Party program through their Parliamentary duties with understanding and sensitiveness to God's purpose for national and international life. Their program therefore seeks to achieve this purpose. He went on to say that their group meets



monthly, emphasizing fellowship, worship, and discussion.

*Christian Action.* The originator and moving force of this movement is Dean of an Oxford college whose service as a chaplain in the RAF during the war was widely acclaimed. He feels that there is a tendency toward indifference on the part of the electorate toward moral considerations in political life, an indifference for which the churches and their leaders are largely responsible. The aim of his program is directed squarely at the laity and is designed to arouse them to an awareness of the need for political understanding and action. To date the emphasis has been on the international scene, with special opposition to a calloused attitude toward the Germans which is not in keeping with Christian principles.

Two years ago Christian Action came out into public attention by a great overflow meeting at Oxford, and late this spring a larger meeting in Albert Hall was held, with Sir Stafford Cripps presiding. There are demands upon Christian Action from throughout the British Isles for setting up local groups and initiating programs for community action.

*Industrial Chaplaincy.* The urge behind both forms of industrial chaplaincy which I found in Great Britain is the same: the churches have dangerously lost touch with the working people. If this process is to be reversed, new forms of ministry must be initiated.

At the beginning of the war the Church of Scotland appointed 250 ministers in local parishes to give one day a week in a plant or factory in the community. The mobility of the working population in war industry was the immediate cause. But the program is being extended into the post-war years. The Home Board of the Church of Scotland decides that a plant is suitable for an industrial chaplain, and that a minister nearby has the necessary qualifications. He is asked to take on this work in addition to his parish responsibilities, and from there on the matter seems to be pretty much up to his initiative

and skill, with only the most general kind of supervision. The results will naturally vary, but the program as a whole has won the active support of management and labor for its continuance. While the number of chaplains is now 230, this small decrease is in no instance due to the withdrawal of support by either industrial group.

As described to me by the Secretary of the Home Board, the industrial chaplain establishes friendly contacts with the workers and executives by visits to the plant. The ultimate aim is to hold meetings in the plant, which in so far as possible take the form of a religious service with an address or sermon. It was emphasized that the church has no criterion for the effectiveness of this program. No record of converts or of names added to church rolls is kept. Rather the program is carried on in the faith that this witness will help re-establish in the Scotch people an affirmative attitude toward the place of the Church in their personal and social problems.

The industrial chaplaincy in the Diocese of Sheffield offers a marked contrast. Its leadership is highly specialized. Canon E. R. Wickham gives his full time with the help of a full-time assistant. Such a program obviously requires special funds, and these come out of the post-war reconstruction program of the Lord Bishop. It is highly localized, being centered in the steel mills of a single city. It is intensive rather than extensive. Its leaders do not aim to reach large numbers through mass techniques, but rather to cultivate small groups, and this only after careful and patient work with key individuals in management and the work force. While its church sponsorship is at all times evident, the program seems less formally religious in character than its Scotch counterpart. No attempt as yet is made to conduct worship services or to give anything that suggests a sermon. Rather the frankest sort of discussions are encouraged, dealing with the church itself and with moral factors in British and international life. This approach is due to the analysis of the situation, namely, that there is present among



English industrial workers such an unsympathetic attitude toward the churches that an effective approach must necessarily be of the broadest and most informal kind. My impression of the work after a two-days' visit was decidedly affirmative. The high caliber of its leadership and the positive approach were striking. It is obvious, however, that the scope of this effort is still quite limited.

*The Iona Movement.* For many Americans this movement is known wholly in terms of its summer program on the Island. It is a matter of deep regret that I had to return home too early in the spring to visit there. But "Iona" is a mainland program as well, which is extensive in its coverage and penetrating in its influence. It is indeed a movement of the spirit that becomes alive in many forms, with a number of titles at times hiding the sponsorship. The Iona movement, for example, is the youth program of the Presbytery of Glasgow of the Church of Scotland. It is venturing out on new and vital forms of youth work through a number of experimental centers. It has its Community House on the Clyde, a sort of "prophetic neighborhood house." Its publishing division puts out literature of a high order. It conducts a Christian Workers' League in Glasgow and Edinburgh through which it establishes a relationship with young industrial workers that carries real promise. Its "Associates" work out its insights in practical parish situations.

It would be presumptuous for me to declare that the Iona movement means more of "this" than of "that." But two impressions stand out from my three-day visit with its dynamic Christian leader, Dr. George F. McLeod. For one thing, "Iona" acts on the conviction that the Christian Church is failing to understand the Gospel in its relevance to the environment and attitudes of modern industrial workers. Church leaders have not come to grips with the facts of twentieth century life and with the needs and aspirations of the "little people." As one said to me, "Unless we of the churches can enter with sym-

pathy and understanding into the reasons that lead young industrial workers who at heart are Christians to become Communists, we will not be talking to the condition of the times."

The other impression is that the Iona movement is convinced that the parish church through its leadership and program must find its appropriate place in the politics of the community, as well as on the national level. By "politics" is meant especially the common and cooperative activity of people as neighbors and citizens in respect to housing, education, recreation, standards of living, and many other aspects of social reconstruction. In their deepest meaning these measures have to do with individual self-respect, with wholesome family living, with community well-being, with national social health. When people as neighbors and citizens make common cause for these individual and social goods and values, the churches and their leaders must be one of the resources at hand. This must be made evident to the people not merely through proclamation, but through actual participation.

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## **Social Significance of the Amsterdam Assembly**

By **JOHN C. BENNETT**

The Amsterdam Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting from August 22 to September 4, gave clear recognition in its very structure to the social responsibility of the Church. More important than anything that it said was the degree of preoccupation with social problems that characterized the Assembly as a whole. When it divided into four sections to discuss the most important issues confronting the Church, two of the sections dealt with what we call "Social Action."

No one at any time suggested publicly that in this the churches were off center and I have heard no criticisms of it in private. It augurs well for the future of the World Council that it was taken for granted at Amsterdam that the Church must be concerned with the hardest and most controversial problems of the social order.

It is not strange that the Assembly was set up in this way, because the same concerns were central in previous ecumenical conferences that prepared the way for the emergence of the World Council. Amsterdam inherited a tradition established by Conferences of the Life and Work Movement at Stockholm (1925) and Oxford (1937) and of the missionary movement at Jerusalem (1928) and Madras (1938). It was never clearer than it is today that the old controversy between those who emphasize a "social gospel" and those who emphasize an individual gospel is dead except on the fringe of the Church.



## The Author

John C. Bennett is Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics in Union Theological Seminary, New York City. In 1946 he spent several months in Geneva in preparation for the Amsterdam Assembly as a temporary secretary of the Study Department of the World Council of Churches. During the Amsterdam Assembly he was the Secretary of the Third Section, which dealt with the Church and the Social Order.

Professor Bennett's most recent books are *Christian Ethics and Social Policy* and *Christianity and Communism*.



### *European Theology and Social Action*

Anglo-Saxon churches and the younger churches of Asia and Africa have long been associated with this emphasis upon social action, but in a quite different way the churches on the European continent have become deeply concerned more recently about politics and economics. It is true that there remains a great theological gulf between the churches of the European continent and most other churches. It would be the judgment of many Americans and others at Amsterdam that the Protestant theology that is dominant on the continent does not provide an adequate basis for Christian social responsibility. But the practice of churchmen on the continent is, in this respect, better than their theology. Even Karl Barth, whose speech at Amsterdam seemed to make Christianity irrelevant to the problems of society, was strangely inconsistent. In one passage he criticized the books that had been written in preparation for Amsterdam for not dealing with "the whole range of problems concerning property, land, rent, capital, interest and money." Karl Barth has no coherent positive program or even coherent principles that should govern Christians as they seek a positive program, but his thought has the most radical implications for society. On the critical side he is strongly anti-capitalist, and, in practice, gives aid and comfort to the Communists though he is far from being a Communist. In regard to Communism his theology betrays him into a kind of irresponsibility which is the opposite of that expected from conservative theology.

Whatever may be said about the defects of the current European theology, the conservative critics in America of the emphasis upon social action would receive no comfort from the European churches. Instead they would encounter the most searching criticism of their own assumptions about society.

### *Mutual Correction*

The Assembly was an example of what it should be pos-

sible to expect when Christians who differ in political conviction and who have had widely contrasting social experiences meet together in the sphere of the Church. At Amsterdam we saw two things happen. On the one hand, there was a very real process of mutual correction. It was difficult for any one to listen day after day to Christians whose experience of life has been entirely different from that of American Christians without realizing that the best Christian judgments in any one region or social situation are often very one-sided. The things that are urgent are very different if you come from Africa or China or Hungary rather than from the United States.

There is a kind of pressure upon one's mind and conscience that can come in no other way than through this first-hand contact with those whose fate has been quite different from one's own. One illustration of this is the attitude that one takes toward racial discrimination. At Amsterdam there was a

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The points of conflict between Christianity and the atheistic Marxian communism of our day are as follows: (1) the Communist promise of what amounts to a complete redemption of man in history; (2) the belief that a particular class by virtue of its role as the bearer of a new order is free from the sins and ambiguities that Christians believe to be characteristic of all human existence; (3) the materialistic and deterministic teachings, however they may be qualified, that are incompatible with belief in God and with the Christian view of man as a person, made in God's image and responsible to Him; (4) the ruthless methods of Communists in dealing with their opponents; (5) the demand of the party on its members for an exclusive and un-

qualified loyalty which belongs only to God, and the coercive policies of Communist dictatorship in controlling every aspect of life.

The church should seek to resist the extension of any system that not only includes oppressive elements but fails to provide any means by which the victims of oppression may criticize or act to correct it. It is a part of the mission of the church to raise its voice of protest wherever men are the victims of terror, wherever they are denied such fundamental human rights as the right to be secure against arbitrary arrest, and wherever governments use torture and cruel punishments to intimidate the consciences of men.

—Report of Amsterdam Assembly



general willingness to go the limit in repudiating both racial discrimination and racial segregation in the Church and in the community, but the statements on race were always made sharper when representatives of the colored races continued to press their case. Also, I believe that the Americans at Amsterdam learned a great deal when they sat through many hours of discussion and heard many condemnations of Capitalism and only once or twice any attempt to defend it. A few may have returned home rather bitter about this, but in general one found among them a sober awareness that much which is taken for granted in this country is now irrelevant to the conditions and to the political possibilities in most of the world.

### *A Healing Dimension*

Another result of this meeting of political opposites within the sphere of the Church was the discovery of a dimension that

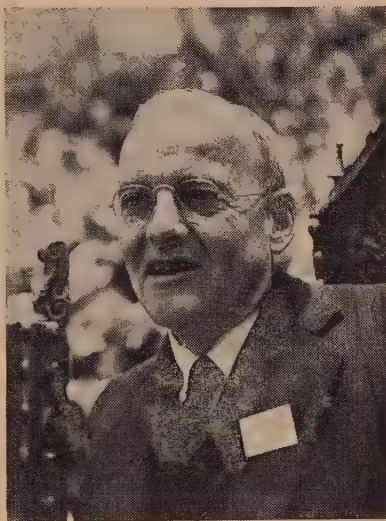


*British Combine*

Professor Joseph L. Hromadka of  
Czechoslovakia.

transcends politics and which can bring healing into political conflict. Perhaps this was clearest in the famous confrontation of Professor Hromadka of Czechoslovakia and Mr. Dulles of the United States. Both men recognized God's judgment upon them and avoided the miserable self-righteousness that poisons most political controversies. The attitude of the Assembly as a whole to Hromadka was quite remarkable. There were very few who shared his optimism about Russia and Communism, but many were able

to learn from his brilliant criticism of the West and they did not doubt that he spoke as a Christian rather than as a political propagandist. There was something here that was deeper than tolerance of a well-meaning opponent. In this case the "opponent" (for Hromadka was a political opponent of the vast majority) was a constant reminder that Christianity cannot be claimed by the West as the justification of its spirit and institutions as they are.



*British Combine*

**John Foster Dulles of the  
United States.**

### *Criticism of the Church*

So far I have said nothing about the reports which contain what Amsterdam said about the social order. Before speaking of the two reports that deal directly with the subject I want to emphasize one tendency that was characteristic of the Assembly as a whole, and which we find in the first two reports that deal respectively with the Church and with evangelism. It is the tendency to criticize the Church itself from the perspective of a sensitive social conscience. In the report of Section One, which is devoted to the doctrine of the Church, there is a fine discussion of "the glory of the Church and the shame of the Churches." It is emphasized that the evils of the world have deeply penetrated our Churches "so that amongst us too there are worldly standards of success, class division, economic rivalry, a secular mind. Even when there are no differences of theology, language or liturgy, there exist churches segregated by race and color, a scandal within the Body of Christ. We are

in danger of being salt that has lost its savor and is fit for nothing." There is a much longer passage along the same lines in the report of Section Two, which dealt with evangelism. There was a surprising amount of moral realism in the thinking about the Church at Amsterdam.

### *A Drastic Document*

The report of the Section (III) on "The Church and the Social Disorder" has had more attention than any other report from Amsterdam. It is probably the most drastic document about the economic order that has come from any Church body that is widely representative of Protestantism. (It represented a part of the Eastern Orthodox Communion as well.) This report was based upon the assumption that there is no *Christian* economic system that can be recommended for all situations, but that Christians must move ahead in each situation with clear social objectives and with understanding of the dangers

The Christian churches should reject the ideologies of both communism and *laissez faire* capitalism, and should seek to draw men away from the false assumption that these extremes are the only alternatives. Each has made promises which it could not redeem. Communist ideology puts the emphasis upon economic justice, and promises that freedom will come automatically after the completion of the revolution. Capitalism puts the emphasis upon freedom, and promises that justice will follow as a by-product of free enterprise; that, too, is an ideology which has been proved false. It is the responsibility of Christians to seek new creative solutions which never allow either justice or freedom to destroy the other.

—Report of Amsterdam Assembly

that beset modern society from both the right and the left. It is impossible for an ecumenical document that is intended to have meaning for the whole world to be precise concerning next steps for any one country. The long-range goal and the dangers to it need to be related likewise to the actual conditions which churches face in different countries or regions. Amsterdam tried to point away from stereotyped and doctrinaire systems with their labels. What it calls for in positive terms would have the appearance of a



modified Socialism in some national situations and of a modified Capitalism in others.

### *Condemnation of Communism and Capitalism*

The report is best known in America for its paragraph condemning the ideologies of Communism and *laissez faire* Capitalism. It is important to read that paragraph in the context of the whole report. In previous paragraphs there is a careful analysis of precise points of conflict between Christianity and Communism on the one hand and between Christianity and Capitalism on the other. This analysis does not put Communism and Capitalism on the same level, for its criticisms of Communism point to inherent characteristics of modern Communism, whereas in the case of Capitalism they point to tendencies in Capitalism that have been counteracted in varying degrees in different countries by "trade unions, social legislation and responsible management." It was realized at Amsterdam that you can live with Capitalism while criticizing it and seeking to change its institutions. On the other hand it is quite untrue to suppose that this paragraph limits the criticisms of Capitalism in the report to a brand of Capitalism that is said to exist no longer—*laissez faire* Capitalism.

The four criticisms of Capitalism in the report still stand as applicable in considerable measure to existing American institutions. These criticisms are as follows: "(1) Capitalism tends to subordinate what should be the primary task of any economy—the meeting of human needs—to the economic advantages of those who have most power over its institutions. (2) It tends to produce serious inequalities. (3) It has developed a practical form of materialism in Western nations in spite of their Christian background, for it has placed the greatest emphasis upon success in making money. (4) It has also kept the people of Capitalist countries subject to a kind of fate which has taken the form of such social catastrophes as mass unemployment."

### *To the Left*

While there were many speeches from all parts of the world calling for a more complete condemnation of Capitalism, only one speech was made in the two hours of discussion in the plenary session of the Assembly criticizing the report from the point of view of a defender of Capitalism. The first speech in favor of the report was made by Mr. Quentin Hogg, a Tory member of the British House of Commons. That may suggest that the report was too conservative but it certainly indicates how far to the left of the American churches is the dominant opinion in the churches in other lands.

### *On International Relations*

The report of Section IV on "The Church and the International Disorder" was the product of a far more difficult discussion than was the case with the third report. There were times when it seemed as if the Section would be unable to agree on any report at all. The Section contained members who carried on extended controversies with each other and it had to deal with a problem concerning which there is actually less consensus in the ecumenical Church than proved to be the case in connection with the economic order.

Much of this report deals with principles concerning world organization and human rights which are sound and of the greatest importance as principles. They would seem to most readers of these words to be indisputable. It is good that the churches on a world scale recognize them because they are principles that are remote from the actual practices of most communities. It is a gain to have such declarations as the following in the report:

We are profoundly concerned by evidence of flagrant violations of human rights. Both individuals and groups are subjected to persecution and discrimination on grounds of race, color, religion, culture or political conviction. Against such actions, whether of governments, officials, or the general public the

churches must take a firm and vigorous stand, through local action, in cooperation with churches in other lands, and through international institutions of legal order.

### *Reflection of Bafflement*

This report was unable to say anything to guide the churches in dealing with the present international power conflict, beyond the rejection of totalitarianism on the one hand and, on the other, the assertion that "a positive attempt must be made to ensure that competing economic systems such as communism, socialism, or free enterprise may co-exist without leading to war." This great omission in the report is an accurate reflection of the bafflement which Christians feel quite generally as they seek to determine what the churches should say concerning the conflict between East and West as an international conflict.

I believe that at one point this report did carry the ecumenical discussion of the Christian attitude toward war a step beyond what was said at the Oxford Conference in 1937. Once more it was agreed that the Church should include both Christian pacifists and Christian non-pacifists. But at Oxford there were two types of Christian non-pacifism that were recognized and one of them was put in a largely nationalistic context and it made disobedience to the national state in time of war very difficult, if not impossible, for the Christian. The nearest equivalent to that position in this report is one that looks upon the military force used by the national state as an interim necessity in upholding "the rule of law" and points the way to the development of "impartial supranational institutions." That is a real gain and it may well be the result of the fact that the very Christians who at Oxford found it most difficult theologically to allow resistance to the national state were the ones who under Hitler found themselves forced to resist their own governments.

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# WASHINGTON REPORT



December 15, 1948

By Thomas B. Keehn

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## THE ELECTION IN REVIEW

October *Washington Report* predicted that the Republicans would probably achieve political power in the 1948 election. Like most political prophets we were wrong. The amazing election fooled almost everyone.

The election result can be analyzed in terms of political blocs, issues and personalities. Geographic, minority and economic blocs are observable in the Democratic victory, but of these the most unexpected was the coalescence of farmer and labor votes. Voters evidenced a high degree of political maturity by their interest in and response to political issues. They wanted frank discussion of problems, not pious platitudes. Finally, that strange, intangible touch which can only be described as a political personality provided the margin of choice for many non-

party-ticket voters.

But any way you slice it, the election was something of a mystery. It could happen only in America, only in that unpredictable social institution called democracy. Certainly outsiders, particularly the Europeans who watched this election with anxious minds, must have been impressed by the spectacle of voters who expressed their individual and collective wills contrary to the predictions of pollsters and papers.

The election affected both the structure and the program of American political parties. It acted as a kind of political catharsis upon the structure of the major parties. The Democrats were of course the greater beneficiaries of this medicine. The party was purged—or at least cleansed—of both the ex-

treme right (Dixiecrat) and left (Wallaceite) wings. The result is a party of the democratic center with surprising vitality and cohesiveness. Not all the ambiguities have been eliminated. Many political anachronisms and contradictions remain. But the Democratic party at least has the opportunity to organize its strength and carry out its program.

Republican party leaders are caught in the crossfire of incipient civil war. The liberal bloc typified by Senators Flanders, Aiken, Tobey, Baldwin, Smith of Maine, Ives, Young and Morse is ready to challenge the old guard. This is not just an "in" vs. an "out" struggle. It is rather a group which wants a positive program based on issues, which is not against cooperation with the Democrats on specific points, versus a group which says no, no, no with machine gun precision and monotony.

It is obvious that the election ended immediate political ambitions for both fringe parties—the Dixiecrats and the Progressives. Not many tears will be shed over this result of the election.

The election also clarified the programs of the major par-

ties. Here the analysis in October *Washington Report* rings true. The world—including the United States—has moved a little left of center. This means it has accentuated the political. There is a larger, more important area for government on both the international and national levels. The 1948 election revealed that certain issues are beyond politics in the partisan sense because they represent the consensus of citizen opinion and they correspond to the social needs of the time.

The Democratic party won, then, not so much because it had a broader base (actually the structure of the organization

#### THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

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 Dr. Carleton R. Ball  
 Dr. Frederick F. Blachly  
 Rev. L. Maynard Catchings  
 Dean Russell A. Dixon  
 Miss Elizabeth Eastman  
 Mrs. Robert E. Fisher  
 Mr. L. Wendell Hayes  
 Miss Hester M. Hood  
 Rev. Alfred W. Hurst  
 Rev. Carl Heath Kopf  
 Mr. Oscar W. B. Reed, Jr.  
 Mrs. Charles D. Rockel  
 Rev. F. Nelson Schlegel

Thomas B. Keehn,  
*Legislative Secretary*

creaked and strained almost to the breaking point) but because it claimed the Roosevelt heritage which dealt forthrightly with critical issues: social welfare, civil rights, economic regulation, and foreign policy. By the same token, the Republicans lost because party schizophrenia prevented clearcut policies on these issues.

The election has defined the jobs to be done and pointed the

direction in which the nation is moving. During the past sixteen years, political leaders, citizens, and the common problems of the nation have been refined in the crucible of depression and war. Now there must be developments in both the structure and function of government. This will be an important and difficult task. Right decisions will demand the wisdom and active concern of everyone.

## **A PROGRAM FOR THE 81ST CONGRESS**

The election will have a profound impact upon the *structure* of government in the United States and in the United Nations. It will also influence the *policies* of the American government.

The machinery of government both in the United States and on the international level must be strengthened to do the job demanded by citizens and the social needs of the time.

### **To Strengthen Government in the U.S.**

1. The Executive branch of government must be streamlined and administrative efficiency increased. Fifteen years of largely unplanned growth makes this

imperative. The report of the Hoover Commission on Organization of the Executive branch is due in January, 1949. This study, authorized by the 80th Congress, should be a useful tool for the 81st.

2. Certain new, key agencies must be carefully examined to see that they are operating according to legal policies. They need critical concern from citizens as well as continued financial support from Congress. These agencies include: the Atomic Energy Commission; the Council of Economic Advisers; and the European Cooperation Administration.

3. Financial and administrative relations between the fed-



eral government and the several states — particularly in welfare and other public service fields—must be examined with a view to determining a sound long-term policy.

4. One of the most difficult but crucial tasks for the federal government today is to clarify the prerogatives and integrate the responsibilities of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.

5. Many phases of the reorganization of Congress Act (1946) are still unfinished business. Most important is the operation of majority and minority party policy committees in the House and the Senate. Other steps need to be taken, particularly modification of Senate rules to eliminate the filibuster, and limitation of the power of the Rules Committee in the House.

6. The demand to modify the function of the Electoral College in Presidential elections —perhaps through the use of the direct primary — has increased. This would entail a constitutional amendment.

## To Strengthen International Government

American governmental agencies and policies should increas-

ingly be oriented to international programs.

1. Extension of the reciprocal trade agreements program (at least a three-year extension should be approved by Congress this spring) and continuation of ERP for at least three more years should be geared to fuller U.S. support and use of such U.N. agencies as: Food and Agriculture Organization; International Trade Organization (its charter will probably come before Congress for approval this spring); International Bank and Monetary Fund; and the

### LEGISLATIVE ACTION

During sessions of Congress, the *Washington Report* section of *Social Action* will try to analyze important legislation before Congress. It will not be possible to indicate effective timing or strategy for action. For readers who would like such information, a mimeographed service will be provided. It will appear approximately twice each month during sessions of Congress. If you would like to be placed on a special mailing list to receive this service, write to:

Legislative Department; Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches; 1751 N Street, N.W.; Washington 6, D.C.

Economic Commission for Europe.

2. Regional political and military agreements within the U.N. charter must be accompanied by continued efforts to achieve international regulation of armaments (including Atomic Energy) by the U.N. until such time as the U.N. develops independent political and military power; a necessary corollary is the maintenance of reasonable military strength in the U.S. Selective Service continues until the spring of 1950 and its extension beyond that date should be reconsidered in the situation existing at that time.

3. Efforts of the U.N. to further welfare services, cultural understanding, and human rights deserve support. An immediate step is removal of discriminatory features of the displaced persons law (approved by the 80th Congress) so that the U.S. can take its share of DP's now cared for by the International Refugee Organization.

4. United States foreign policy must both support the U.N. as it now operates and, at the same time, encourage those gradual, specific steps which will eventually transform it into a truly international government.

## AGENDA FOR ACTION

The clearest test of the meaning of the election and of the nature of the political order in the United States will be seen in the way the 81st Congress deals with certain critical issues. The general situation in 1948 is both alike and different from 1932. Then, as now, the voters supported a program of action. But the differences are perhaps more distinctive.

1932 was a time of depression; 1948 is a period of inflation. Some important federal

welfare and regulatory programs are now operating. Sixteen years ago they were largely non-existent. The only real question today is how shall these functions be improved and expanded. For nearly ten years the nation has been geared to war and preparation for war. While this still represents an important factor, a certain balance and stability in military preparedness will probably be achieved unless war should actually break out. During the

past decade, many domestic functions of government have been frozen. The Truman redeal as contrasted to the Roosevelt New Deal will not produce startling innovations and changes in policy. But it will signal a forward movement on many legislative fronts.

These things, taken together, add up to the fact that the 81st Congress will have an agenda for action in the fields of social welfare, civil rights and economic problems. Here are some of the issues upon which discussion will be focused and where important decisions will be reached.

## **Social Welfare**

1. **Social Security.** Legislation to extend and expand provisions for old-age insurance, unemployment compensation and public assistance will be introduced.

2. **Housing.** Many features of the Taft-Ellender-Wagner housing bill (80th Congress) will be reintroduced. These include particularly a low-cost public housing program, slum clearance, aids for rural housing, and research. In addition, a housing program for middle-income families, including aids to co-

operative housing projects, may be proposed.

3. **Education.** Federal financial aid to the states for elementary and secondary education, along the lines of the Taft bill (80th Congress) will undoubtedly receive serious consideration. A program for higher education may also be presented to Congress.

4. **Health.** Extension of county health units and health services for school children are on the agenda for the 81st Congress. The controversial subject of health insurance will be hotly debated but action is uncertain.

5. **Welfare Department.** A movement to establish a federal department of Welfare, with cabinet status, will be pushed forward in the 81st Congress.

## **Civil Rights**

1. **Un-American Activities Committee.** One of the first legislative issues of 1949 may be the liquidation of the House Un-American Activities Committee and the creation of a joint House and Senate Committee on Civil Liberties. This Committee will be charged with the protection both of individual rights and of national security.



### 2. Committee Procedure.

The procedures of Congressional Committees in the conduct of hearings may be defined for the purpose of guarding the rights of witnesses.

### 3. F.E.P.C., Poll Tax, Anti-

**Lynch.** A priority list will probably be worked out for civil rights legislation set forth by the President's Committee on Civil Rights. Proposals include establishment of a fair employment practices committee, an anti-poll tax bill and an anti-lynching bill. Most Southern Democrats will, of course, continue to oppose such legislation although a compromise on some of these issues may be worked out.

4. **Immigration Law.** A bill introduced by Rep. Walter Judd in the 80th Congress to remove race as a limiting factor in immigration laws will be reintroduced in the 81st Congress.

## Economic Regulation

1. **Taft-Hartley Act.** Number one problem for the 81st Congress will probably be the Taft-Hartley labor law. It may be seriously amended or repealed outright. In the latter case, the Wagner Act will be reestablished and a commit-

tee to study and propose some amendments will probably be created.

2. **Minimum Wage.** The minimum wage law will undoubtedly be revised and the legal minimum raised from 40c. an hour to at least 75c. an hour.

3. **Inflation Controls.** Details of a program to combat inflation have not been agreed upon. Continuation of rent control and some regulation of bank credit are likely. Allocation of scarce goods and price and wage controls are less probable.

4. **Agricultural Legislation.** Some pressure may be exerted to modify the parity formula for price supports for agricultural products as adopted in the closing days of the 80th Congress. Extension of the rural electrification program and the loan authority of the Community Credit Corporation can be expected. Perhaps some services for migratory agricultural labor will be authorized.

Two miscellaneous programs which will be hot issues in the 81st Congress are extension of valley authority developments and the establishment of a national science foundation.

Problems such as these, along

with changes in the machinery of the federal government and foreign policy, constitute impressive agenda for the 81st Congress. Church people will be vitally concerned in the decisions reached. Ethical principles of love and justice, a deep concern for human values, must guide every decision. Government action which is responsible and responsive to the will of the people may be desirable if it carries forward these principles. On the other

hand, government can never be accepted uncritically as a solvent of all problems.

*Washington Report* will analyze these legislative issues during the months ahead. It will report on political trends. It will also be concerned with administrative activities in the Executive branch of the government and with decisions of the Supreme Court. Always it will attempt to confront Christians with the full duties of citizenship in a democratic nation.

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## On To Action

Before the national election I wrote a draft for this December "On To Action" with these words, "The position of the Christian liberal in the United States today is somewhat comparable to that of Elijah in the cave of Horeb. He had fiercely attacked and demolished the Baal cult. He had assailed evil in high places with outstanding success. But now the tide had turned against him. 'I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.'"

Since those words were written, the wind, earthquake and fire have passed by. The liberal now hears the still, small, but insistent voice saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah? Go, return on thy way. . . . Anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu . . . king over Israel; and Elisha . . . to be prophet in thy room." There is a job to be done in the United Nations, in the Eighty-first Congress, in the labor movement, in training, recruiting, appointing leaders.

One of the rapidly growing fields for Christian vocation is international relations. Among the laymen closely associated with the Council for Social Action, one is an administrator in the office of the United States' delegation to the United Nations, another is conducting State Department negotiations over the future of Germany, another is advisor to the United States on the International Labor Organization program. There is a call to young men and women to enter international law, negotiation and administration as a Christian vocation to build stable relations between the great powers and to aid the development of retarded peoples.

Government service is offering ever new opportunities in health, education and public welfare, as well as public service from the local school board to the Presidency. Here is a special mission for our church-related colleges—to train for citizenship and vocations in government. If churches dignify this calling there will be no lack of a "king over Israel."

Is there a vocation in the labor movement which devoted Christians can fulfill? This is not an academic question. It will be determined by the life, brains and spirit poured into the unions. Here, as in world and national affairs, there is work for the liberal Christian to "return on thy way, anoint Hazael, Jehu and a prophet in thy room."

Ray Gibbons